

WHAT IS CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE?



Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is an infectious disease of deer, elk, reindeer and moose (cervids) that affects the central nervous system and can kill all cervids. Caribou are probably affected too. CWD can't be cured but, so far, does not affect humans other than to reduce hunting herds.

An infected cervid does not look ill for many years. When it is obviously sick it will have weight loss, poor co-ordination and other signs before it dies. Infected cervids are also more easily killed by hunting or vehicle collisions.

CWD is a prion disease in the same family of diseases as scrapie in sheep, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle (also known as "mad cow disease") and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans. Prions are infectious abnormal proteins that accumulate in the brain and other tissues.

No human cases of CWD have been diagnosed yet but it cannot be ignored as a potential illness. It is important for First Nation community members to reduce the spread of the disease so healthy herds will be available to hunt in the future for food.

What can Hunters do?

- Get your deer, moose, elk or caribou cervid brain tested with Saskatchewan Environment.
- Continue hunting traditions.
- Avoid long-distance movements with your deer carcass. This helps ensure hunters aren't transporting the disease to new herds.
- All transported carcass waste should be double-bagged and taken to a landfill.
- Handle and dispose of your carcass in a responsible manner.
- If you hunt out of province, only bring back low-risk parts (deboned meat, cleaned skull plate, antlers, finished taxidermy mount), leave the spinal column or head where the animal was taken.
- Do not feed cervid scraps to pets or they can get sick.
- Stay up to date on the latest hunting information on CWD.
- Keep hunting and support ongoing information gathering to protect future herds by hunting and submitting heads for testing.

Butchering and Dressing

- Protect yourself when butchering by wearing disposable gloves.
- Use separate tools for field dressing than you do for butchering.
- Try not to cut or sever the the spleen, spinal cord, brain and lymph nodes (grey/green lumps of tissue next to organs).
- Minimize your contact with internal organs and central nervous system tissue.
- Try not to cut through bones.
- Ensure brain matter and guts don't contact edible meat parts.
- Clean and disinfect tools and surfaces with soapy water and then use a household bleach solution on them (2 parts bleach to 3 parts water).

HUNTERS CAN HELP REDUCE THE SPREAD OF CWD TO NEW AREAS OF THE PROVINCE. CARCASSES SHOULD BE FIELD DRESSED AND DEBONED NEAR THE HARVEST LOCATION OR, NOT TRANSPORTED MORE THAN 80 KM.

More information on how to submit heads for sampling can be found at: [Managing Chronic Wasting Disease: Taking Action and Testing | Overview of Chronic Wasting Disease in Saskatchewan | Government of Saskatchewan](#)

